

U.S. Department of Transportation Maritime Administration

Plan for Increasing the Public Availability
of Agency Operation Information

May 4, 2016

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Executive Summary

This plan responds to a March 20, 2015 memorandum from the U.S. Department of Transportation General Counsel and Chief Information Officer that requires each Operating Administration to develop a specific action plan for making “in demand” information publicly available on an ongoing basis.

The mission of the Maritime Administration (MARAD), a modal administration under the U.S. Department of Transportation is to foster, promote, and develop the maritime industry of the United States in order to meet the economic, environmental, and security needs of the United States of America. MARAD’s oversight responsibilities encompass shipbuilding, port development, vessel management, as well as advocating for the maritime industries and the Merchant Marine of the United States.

MARAD currently maintains a proactive program for providing “in demand” information to the public. MARAD utilizes its website (www.marad.dot.gov) the Federal Register, and engagement with the media and maritime industry to make data and information available.

MARAD is committed to providing transparency through open data initiatives and proactively carrying out its mission of advocating for the U.S. Merchant Marine and maritime industry.

Section 1: Understanding Data in Demand

MARAD information in demand consists of maritime data & statistics, maritime industry resources and information, material from Freedom of Information Act requests, historical maritime information, and annual reports & publications. MARAD maintains a public website (www.marad.dot.gov) which is constantly and consistently updated by multiple program offices.

Data in demand is also included in the proposed MARAD Information Technology (IT) Strategic Plan. Among its strategic goals and objectives, there is a focus on data management. One of the strategic goals is Information Sharing, with an associated objective to enhance the quality, accessibility, and usefulness of MARAD information assets. A related objective is to maximize the dissemination and utility of public data sets in accordance with the Open Government and Digital Government initiatives. This Plan will be executed starting in FY 2017 subject to the initial funding of MARAD's IT Optimization investment.

1.1 Review of Existing Practices

The following are several examples of current releases that have made MARAD more efficient or were responsive to a demonstrated need for the information:

MARAD Open Data Portal

MARAD has provided maritime data and statistics to the public for over 50 years. These data include information on the U.S.-Flagged, privately-owned, cargo-carrying merchant fleet, and waterborne trade data along with ad-hoc reports.

Recently, MARAD has renamed its data & statistics webpage the [MARAD Open Data Portal](#) which hosts data, reports, and URLs to other MARAD program data relevant to internal and external stakeholders.

MARAD has responded to recent stakeholder suggestions through FOIA inquiries and informal e-mails to the data group's e-mail address (DATA.MARAD@DOT.GOV), along with phone calls to the Office of Policy and Plans, and has made available historic and archived maritime data such as:

- Historic Vessel Inventory Reports from 1990 to 2000
- Containerized Cargo Statistics from 1980 to 1983

In addition, MARAD has expanded time coverage and revised methodologies on some of its current reports in response to stakeholder input and feedback. Such examples of revisions include:

- Revising Vessel Calls Statistics into one cohesive dataset
- Including summary tables that contain summary data on U.S.-Flag Fleet Activity

MARAD will keep this information current by reviewing the needs of stakeholders that contact data & statistics staff. MARAD also responds to maritime industry trends and adjusts its data releases based off the same.

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Fleet Lists & U.S. Flag Fleet Contact Information

As part of MARAD's mission to promote and foster the U.S. Merchant Marine, multiple program offices maintain contact information and fleet lists for waterborne carriers and operators as a resource for the users of the maritime industry and the general public. The MARAD Open Data Portal contains a URL for each of these U.S.-Flag Fleet lists in order to provide information that is used by MARAD Senior Leadership, MARAD employees and other maritime stakeholders for research and their business needs.

The following are some of the various lists maintained by MARAD of U.S.-Flag Fleet vessels:

Description	Link
The MARAD Office of Cargo and Commercial Sealift maintains a list of contact information for U.S. Flag waterborne carriers.	Contact Information for U.S. Flag Carriers
The MARAD Office of Cargo and Commercial Sealift maintains a list of vessels participating in the agricultural preference trade updated monthly.	Vessels participating in the agricultural preference trade
The MARAD Office of Policy and Plans maintains a list of U.S.-Flag, privately-owned, cargo-carrying vessels updated monthly.	MARAD Open Data Portal
National Defense Reserve Fleet Inventory (NDRF)	National Defense Reserve Fleet Webpage
Ready Reserve Force Inventory	Ready Reserve Force Webpage
Maritime Security Program	Maritime Security Program (MSP)
Voluntarily Intermodal Sealift Agreement Participants	Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement (VISA)

MARAD keeps this information current by reviewing fleet lists and reaching out to ocean carriers for their fleet lists and contact information.

Trends of the U.S. Flag Fleet

MARAD has custody of historical cargo and government vessel lists ranging back to the 1940s. As program office resources permit, these files will be electronically imaged and made available to the public for consumption and research.

MARAD History Program

Historical data from MARAD and MARAD predecessor agencies have always been popular data in demand for researchers and for litigation. The MARAD history program regularly makes data available to the public and is one of the most frequently updated sections on the MARAD website. These data include:

- [MARAD Vessel History Database](#)
- [Historical Documents and MARAD Annual Reports](#)
- [Monthly updates to the archive of the National Defense Reserve Fleet \(NDRF\)](#)
- [A joint effort with the MARAD FOIA and History Program](#): In an instance where a FOIA request comes in for a vessel, the pertinent documents found in the search will be linked with the appropriate ship on the Vessel History Database

MARAD will keep this historical information current by responding to stakeholder and FOIA requests on a timely basis and taking stakeholder suggestions into account. Monthly updates of [historical publications](#) are also published by the MARAD History Program.

MARAD Public Affairs Program

MARAD is very proactive in publishing relevant press releases that pertain to MARAD interaction with the maritime industry. Some of these press releases announce a new report or publication available for the public to view. Most of the time, these press releases will be republished or utilized by maritime media outlets. The [Publications](#) section of the MARAD website is also updated with relevant documents as they are released through the public affairs process.

MARAD also maintains a social media presence through its website, its Facebook page which has more than 1,500 followers, the DOT Fast Lane blog and also through an active Listserv which contains over 5,000 recipients.

Cargo Preference

Our cargo preference laws support a privately owned commercial U.S.-Flag fleet to be available to meet national economic and security needs by requiring government-impelled, ocean-borne cargo in international trade to be transported by U.S.-Flag vessels. The MARAD Office of Cargo and Commercial Sealift monitors the cargo preference compliance of a wide array of agencies that sponsor impelled cargo, such as the Departments of Defense, State, Agriculture, Commerce, and Transportation and their operating components.

MARAD currently publishes data and statistics on government sponsored cargoes in its Congressional Annual Report. MARAD will shift toward a transparent approach to this by displaying these data on its website.

State Maritime Academy/USMMA Graduate Data

MARAD provides information furnished by the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) and State Maritime Academies (SMA). These data include total number of graduates from USMMA and SMAs along with the employment and disposition data for graduates. In addition, the report

breaks down graduates that were in a licensed track at USMMA or an SMA.¹ MARAD seeks to have annual updates of this data on the [Open Data Portal](#) along with historical data as time progresses.

Improving Current Practices

MARAD identifies information/data in demand for posting by regularly reviewing its Google web analytics, identifying program offices that proactively use MARAD content management system (WordPress), examining trends in its FOIA requests and trends in the U.S. maritime industry. The MARAD Office of Policy and Plans, Chief Information Officer and Congressional & Public Affairs will champion current practices in releasing data and innovate new processes in coordination with various MARAD program offices.

Section 2: Meeting Mandatory Posting Requirements

2.1 Congressional Reports

MARAD Congressional Reports are publically released on the MARAD website under [Publications](#) once they clear MARAD Office of Congressional and Public Affairs and Senior Leadership approval.

2.2 Congressional Testimony

MARAD Congressional Testimony is posted on the U.S. Department of Transportation's [Testimony before Congress](#) webpage.

2.3 Freedom of Information Act Request Logs

MARAD will post a log of its FOIA requests on an annual basis. The FOIA logs will be posted by November 1 each year in the [MARAD FOIA Electronic Reading Room](#) under "Frequently Requested Records." The MARAD FOIA Office will be responsible for meeting this objective.

2.4 Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room

MARAD's process for ensuring that statutorily-mandated [MARAD FOIA Electronic Reading Room](#) records are current (four categories, including "frequently requested records") as outlined in 5 U.S.C. § 552 includes identifying and posting documents that have been requested three times or are judged likely to be repeatedly requested.

Section 3: Considering Additional Items for Posting

3.1 Funding and/or Apportionment Tables

MARAD currently has some archived funding and apportionment tables on its website. MARAD will explore the possibility of keeping this section up to date with current budget estimates.

¹ License Track refers to an academic major at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy or State Maritime Academy where a graduate is actively working toward a U.S. Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Credential with Endorsement.

3.2 Correspondence Logs

MARAD has explored the possibility of posting correspondence logs. It has determined that correspondence logs will not be posted routinely. However, in an instance where multiple FOIA requests are received for particular Congressional correspondence, the responsive records or logs will be posted in MARAD's Electronic Reading Room as frequently requested records as part of the regular FOIA request process.

Section 4: Protecting Sensitive Information from Release

MARAD ensures that private, privileged, or other sensitive data are not posted on its website. MARAD employees often work with data that is deemed proprietary. Where applicable, employees sign non-disclosure agreements and go through safeguard checks to ensure adherence to regulations (e.g. proprietary or Business Sensitive Information). Content posted on the website is routed through an immediate supervisor and MARAD Office of Public Affairs before being published on the website.

Section 5: New Initiatives/Courses of Action

MARAD is constantly exploring new initiatives to make its information relevant and available to the public. MARAD will strive to coordinate amongst program offices to ensure a non-duplication of effort. The new Open Data Portal maintained by the MARAD Office of Policy and Plans will seek to provide timely data & statistical information along with links to popular MARAD programs such as vessel history and documentation and domestic shipping resources.

The following are some courses of action MARAD will take to increase visibility of its on-demand data to the public

- Execute the MARAD IT Optimization initiative starting in FY 2017, subject to initial funding, which includes a large focus on data management, data quality, authoritative data, and the related technology solution(s) and governance.
- Update the [Publications](#) Page with relevant reports that have been released by MARAD.
- Publish Government Sponsored Cargoes carried on U.S.-Flag Vessels on the website.
- Increase coordination between program offices in keeping data on the U.S.-Flag Fleet and its program up-to-date.
- Increase the use of the MARAD Open Data Portal and make datasets available to researchers to mine.
- Provide written guidance on the different U.S.-Flag Fleet lists available on the MARAD website.
- Explore creating pages for gaps identified in sections above and populating it with relevant information.
- Champion web content management through proactive management and collaboration with MARAD program offices through MARAD Chief Information Officer and MARAD Public Affairs.
- Work to provide MARAD data products and tables in machine readable language.

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The MARAD Office of Policy and Plans, which currently maintains control of the Open Data Portal, will collaborate and work with other MARAD program offices and the MARAD Office of the Chief Information Officer to spearhead these courses of actions.

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